



**MINUTES
OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL
Regular Meeting
October 5, 2021**

MEMBERS, OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

Mr. John Elliott, Chairman, District I
Mr. Paul Cain, Vice Chairman, District III
Mr. Julian Davis III, Chairman Pro Tem, District IV
Mr. Glenn Hart, District V
Mr. Matthew Durham, District II

Oconee County Council met at 6:00 PM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Council Members, County Attorney David Root, and Oconee County staff member, Vivian Kompier present.

Press: Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting, date, time, place of meeting and agenda were posted on the bulletin board at the County Administrative Offices, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC, and the County Council website [www.oconeesc.com/council]. In addition, it was made available [*upon request*] to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Members of the press present: Riley Morningstar / The Journal

Call to Order

Mr. Elliott called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Elliott opened the meeting reminding the public they have two opportunities to speak during Council meetings, which is during the public comment session and also during the public hearing session, if scheduled. Other than those two instances, the public should remain silent during the Council meeting. Anyone making a disturbance during the meeting will be asked to leave Council Chambers for the remainder of the meeting.

Moment of Silence

Mr. Elliott requested a moment of silence prior to the Invocation by County Council Chaplain.

Invocation by County Council Chaplain

Mr. Root, County Council Chaplain, gave the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Hart led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, to approve the September 7, 2021 Regular Minutes.

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Mr. Hart requested a name correction from “Gary” to “Eric” [Barnhill] for the District 5 nomination to the Oconee County Aeronautics Commission, which motion to revise the minutes was approved 5-0. The revised minutes were then approved 5 – 0.

Attorney’s Comments

Mr. Root acknowledged Ms. Brock’s absence. Mr. Root addressed Council concerning a statement from the Auditor’s office. The statement regarded a delay in the mailing of the 2021 Tax Notices due to a data extract error.

Mr. Root also addressed Council and the public regarding inquiries related to the Keowee Fire District Bond, that while this area is a division of the County, the Keowee Fire District is responsible for the bond payments.

Finally, Mr. Root notated a clerical error on the agenda regarding Resolution 2021-11, which should reflect the correct Resolution 2021-13.

Administrator’s Comments

None at this meeting.

Proclamation 2021-13 Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, approved 5 – 0, to approve **Proclamation 2021-13** honoring Mr. Jules Grosjean, Oconee County Airport Operations Supervisor, upon his retirement.

Mr. Jules Grosjean was in attendance and received a copy of Proclamation 2021-13.

Proclamation 2021-14 Mr. Cain made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis, approved 5-0, to approve **Proclamation 2021-14** honoring Mr. Daniel Mathis, Oconee County Rock Quarry Equipment Operator IV, upon his retirement.

Mr. Thom Moxley, Oconee County Rock Quarry Manager, accepted Proclamation 2021-14 on behalf of Mr. Daniel Mathis.

Public Comment Session

If you are not able to attend in person and you have a comment, you may submit it by contacting the Clerk to Council at councilclerkinfo@oconeesc.com or 864-718-1023, so that your comment may be read into the record.

Mr. Tony Adams addressed Council regarding the Golden Corner Commerce Park.

Mr. Perry Smith addressed Mr. Elliott regarding a publication concerning the citizens of Oconee County. Mr. Smith also expressed his support for Mr. Durham.

Mr. Mickey Haney addressed Council concerning the Oconee County budget on the Oconee County Website.

Council Member Comments

Mr. Elliott announced Jennifer C. Adams as the new Clerk to Oconee County Council.

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Mr. Durham responded to Mr. Tony Adams's comments regarding Golden Corner Commerce Park. Mr. Durham addressed Mr. Mickey Haney's comments and stated he would like to make a motion to include general ledger codes in upcoming budgets and make the information available to the public at no cost upon request. To ensure compliance with the SC Freedom of Information Act, Mr. Root advised that the matter be placed on the agenda for the next Council meeting for further discussion. Mr. Durham revoked his previous motion.

Mr. Davis welcomed Jennifer C. Adams to her new position as Clerk to Council and thanked all applicants.

Mr. Davis responded to Mr. Mickey Haney's comments regarding budget transparency and stated he needed more time to review information.

Public Hearings for the Following Ordinances

Ordinance 2021-20 "AN ORDINANCE TO APPROPRIATE AND AUTHORIZE THE EXPENDITURE OF A PORTION OF LOCAL CORONAVIRUS FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDING THAT HAS BEEN ALLOCATED TO OCONEE COUNTY UNDER THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021 ("ARPA"), AS FOLLOWS: (1) APPROPRIATING THREE MILLION AND 00/100 (\$3,000,000.00) DOLLARS OF COUNTY ARPA FUNDING FOR PURPOSES OF NECESSARY WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE CITY OF SENECA ("SENECA WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT"); (2) AUTHORIZING THE EXPENDITURE, SUBJECT TO CERTAIN TERMS AND CONDITIONS, OF UP TO THREE MILLION AND 00/100 (\$3,000,000.00) DOLLARS OF SUCH APPROPRIATED FUNDS FOR THE SENECA WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT; AND (3) OTHER MATTERS DIRECTLY RELATED THERETO."

As directed by Council on August 17, 2021

Mr. Elliott opened the floor for Public Comment.

Noting that no citizens signed up to address Council, Mr. Elliott opened the floor for any citizen wishing to address Council regarding this ordinance. No citizen addressed Council.

Mr. Elliott asked if any citizens wished to submit written comments regarding this ordinance; no citizen presented any written comments for the record.

Mr. Elliott closed the Public Hearing regarding **Ordinance 2021-20**.

Third Reading of the Following Ordinances

Ordinance 2021-20 *[see caption above]*

Mr. Cain made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, approved 5 – 0, to approve **Ordinance 2021-20** on third and final reading.

Second Reading of the Following Ordinances

Ordinance 2021-21 "AN ORDINANCE TO APPROPRIATE AND AUTHORIZE THE EXPENDITURE OF A PORTION OF LOCAL CORONAVIRUS FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDING THAT HAS BEEN ALLOCATED TO OCONEE COUNTY UNDER THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021

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("ARPA"), AS FOLLOWS: (1) APPROPRIATING TWO MILLION, FOUR HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR THOUSAND, EIGHTY AND 00/100 (\$2,474,080.00) DOLLARS OF COUNTY ARPA FUNDING FOR PURPOSES OF NECESSARY WATER / WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE CITY OF WALHALLA ("WALHALLA WATER / WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT"); (2) AUTHORIZING THE EXPENDITURE, SUBJECT TO CERTAIN TERMS AND CONDITIONS, OF UP TO TWO MILLION, FOUR HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR THOUSAND, EIGHTY AND 00/100 (\$2,474,080.00) DOLLARS OF SUCH APPROPRIATED FUNDS FOR THE WALHALLA WATER / WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT; AND (3) OTHER MATTERS DIRECTLY RELATED THERETO."

As directed by Council on September 7, 2021

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Durham, approved 5-0, to approve **Ordinance 2021-21** on second reading.

First Reading of the Following Ordinances

Ordinance 2021-23 -- TO BE CONSIDERED AFTER EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ordinance 2021-24 AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS, IN ONE OR MORE SERIES, TAX-EXEMPT OR TAXABLE, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$1,500,000 FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACQUIRING, CONSTRUCTING, EQUIPPING, OR REHABILITATING VARIOUS CAPITAL PROJECTS IN THE KEOWEE FIRE TAX DISTRICT; AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO PRESCRIBE THE FORM AND DETAILS OF THE BONDS; PROVIDING FOR THE PAYMENT OF THE BONDS AND THE DISPOSITION OF THE PROCEEDS OF THE BONDS; PROVIDING FOR BORROWING IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF THE BONDS; AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Cain, to approve **Ordinance 2021-24** on first reading.

Mr. Elliott stated the age of the current firetruck is thirty (30) years old and that it is no longer dependable. The new ladder/platform combo truck will better serve the citizens of this Keowee Fire District and the approved millage increase covers the bond payment. Also, no County funds will be used for the purchase of this firetruck.

Mr. Davis stated that several meetings had been held and the citizens of this Keowee Special Fire Tax District are in full support of the purchase of the new ladder/platform combination truck.

Regarding the motion made by Mr. Davis, Council unanimously approved Ordinance 2021-24.

First & Final Reading of the Following Resolutions

RESOLUTION 2021-13 A RESOLUTION CERTIFYING CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY IN OCONEE COUNTY AS AN ABANDONED TEXTILE MILL SITE, INCLUDING PARCELS IDENTIFIED BY TAX MAP NUMBERS 210-00-01-003, 210-00-01-073, 210-00-01-024, AND 210-00-01-023.

Mr. Cain made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis to approve Resolution 2021-13 on first and final reading.

Mr. Hart asked Mr. Root what the benefit would be to the property owners to have this property certified. Mr.

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Root informed Council that the developer can monetize as income tax credits, but may not receive property tax relief.

Regarding the motion made by Mr. Cain, Council unanimously approved **Resolution 2021-13**.

Discussion Regarding Action Items

Council approval of Oconee County Conservation Bank expenditure in the amount of \$29,999 for a conservation easement to Oconee Soil & Water Conservation District - William C. Keese, 40.09 acres approved unanimously by the Oconee County Conservation Bank Board on Wednesday, September 29, 2021.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Cain to approve Oconee County Conservation Bank expenditure in the amount of \$29,999 for a conservation easement to Oconee Soil & Water Conservation District.

Mr. Andy Smith gave a presentation outlining the plans to rebuild a working mill on site and to use 13 acres to grow grain that will be processed by the mill. Conservation of the property will be transferred to Foothills Farmstead and OCSWCD will manage the conservation. The Regional Foothills Council will provide administrative services to Foothills Farmstead.

Mr. Hart commented on the beauty of the property.

Mr. Durham expressed his opposition to current conservation easements in Oconee County, stating one-third of the County is federally-owned forest. He further stated placing land in conservation easements now could potentially strip future land owners of their personal property rights.

Regarding the motion made by Mr. Davis, Council unanimously approved Oconee County Conservation Bank expenditure in the amount of \$29,999 for a conservation easement to Oconee Soil & Water Conservation District.

Council Approval of In-kind Materials in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 for the Foothills Agriculture Resource and Marketing (FARM) Center

Since receiving a South Carolina Department of Agriculture Community grant in 2019, the FARM Center has been working to expand the footprint of the fairgrounds to enlarge educational and agricultural displays for major events, add an access road, and expand parking.

The FARM Center also supports other charitable groups within Oconee County, such as band boosters, baseball teams, FFA and ROTC programs at local schools, the Shriners and the Masons. Additionally, the FARM Center has increased the USDA/DSS Senior Voucher program in Oconee County by creating Market Tokens for seniors to have more dollars to spend on fresh, local, healthy foods. The farmers' market attracted 350 to 450 visitors weekly last year, 80 percent of which were visitors from outside Oconee County, and over 11,000 people pass through the FARM Center annually. In-kind materials will help continue these and other future improvements to the FARM Center property.

It is the staff's recommendation that Council approve in-kind materials in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 for the Foothills Agriculture Resource and Marketing Center for the continuation of improvements.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Cain to approve In-kind Materials in an amount not to exceed

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\$30,000 for the Foothills Agriculture Resource and Marketing (FARM) Center.

Mr. Hart stated he is against approving additional funds to the FARM center, and that he would like to “wean them off” using taxpayer money.

Mr. Durham stated that it is not kind or compassionate to be charitable with other people’s money.

Mr. Cain stated that he supports agriculture, the FARM Center property is owned by Oconee County and that investing in the FARM Center would provide a return to Oconee County.

Mr. Davis expressed his support of the FARM center, noting the Farmer’s Market is a great place to buy locally grown produce.

Regarding the motion made by Mr. Davis, Council approved 3 – 2 [Mr. Hart and Mr. Durham opposed], the allocation of in-kind materials to the Foothills Agriculture Resource Marketing Center.

Purchase of Extreme Network Switches Department: IT Amount: \$ 180,985.10

This purchase is for the replacement of all of the access layer switches at Pine Street and remote locations with Extreme Network switches to include five-year hardware and software support. Extreme Network switches provide advanced network edge features, including cloud-enabled management, on-demand provisioning, and secure branch routing, to provide fast, reliable, and secure wired connectivity.

The current switches are 7-10 years old and have reached their end of life and no longer have technical support. The purchase of the Extreme Network switches will provide an improved infrastructure with simplified management and serviceability. The network refresh will allow Oconee County IT the capability of managing its data, voice and wireless throughout the County upon completion of the county-wide implementation. The new switches will be managed with a cloud-based system. The County is currently utilizing the Extreme Network wireless infrastructure that will tie in with the cloud portal for management.

It is the staff’s recommendation that Council approve the purchase of the county wide Extreme Network switches in the amount of \$180,985.10 and authorize the County Administrator to execute the Payment Plan Agreement in substantially the same form as attached hereto (or with such material changes as benefit the County, upon advice of the County Attorney), along with such other documents necessary to effect this purchase.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Cain, approved 5 – 0, to approve the Purchase of Extreme Network Switches as presented.

Council Committee Reports

None scheduled for this meeting.

Board & Commission Appointments

Building Codes Appeal Board

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1 At-Large Seat: No questionnaire on file for this seat.

Executive Session:

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Durham, approved 5 – 0, to enter into Executive Session for the following purposes, as allowed for in § 30-4-70(a) of the South Carolina Code of Laws:

[1] Receive legal advice and discuss potential litigation related to public nuisance and related issues and complaints.

[2] Receive legal advice and discuss potential contractual matter regarding County-owned real property.

[3] Discuss an Economic Development matter, Project Queso.

[4] Discuss an Economic Development matter, Project Ruby Slipper.

Council entered Executive Session at 6:47 p.m.

Council returned from Executive Session at 7:22 p.m. on a motion made by Mr. Hart, seconded by Mr. Durham, approved 5 – 0.

Mr. Elliott stated no action was taken in Executive Session.

Mr. Cain made a motion in relation to Executive Session Item [1], which was seconded by Mr. Hart, and approved 5 – 0, to direct staff to proceed with litigation as discussed.

Ordinance 2021-23 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF A GROUND LEASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN OCONEE COUNTY AS LESSOR AND FAIRVIEW COMMUNITY CHURCH AS LESSEE FOR CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY LOCATED 16 PADGETT STREET, SENECA, SOUTH CAROLINA; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO.

Mr. Cain made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis, approved 5 – 0, to postpone this matter to receive additional information from the County Administrator.

Adjourn:

Mr. Hart made a motion, approved unanimously, to adjourn at 7:24 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Acting Clerk to Council

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